

## **Hindu Religion & Violence Against Women**

- Religion is a personal and an institutional reality in the lives of the majority of the population; it is no surprise that religious teaching and affiliation provide a significant context for many women as they address experiences of victimization.
- Religious texts and teachings can serve as resources to assist those who have experienced abuse in finding safety and in the process of healing. Yet, religion can also be misused to excuse or condone abusive behavior. In the context of violence against woman, religious teachings and communities will play a role.
- It is important to acknowledge the tremendous diversity of beliefs, teachings, and tradition that exist among the many religions of the world. In addition, with any one particular religion such as Hindu religion, there may exist many denominations, or traditions within their own distinct institutions cultures and teachings.
- There are many civilizations in the world where respect for women and their role in society are prominent and others where regard for them and their status should be improved. Most venerating regard for women has been found in Vedic culture. The Vedic tradition has held in a high regard for the qualities of women and has retained the greatest respect within its tradition as seen in the honor it gives for the Goddess – portrayed as the feminine embodiment of things, qualities and powers. These forms include Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth & prosperity), Saraswati, (Goddess of Learning & Wisdom) as on. Even the divine power in the form of ‘sakti’ is feminine.
- Throughout the many years of Vedic culture, women have always been given the highest level of respect and freedom, but also protection and safety. As per Vedic saying – ‘where women are worshipped, there the Gods dwell and when women are happy, there will be prosperity (Manu Sumhita).’ In Vedic tradition, history shows many women have risen to great heights in spirituality, government, writing, education, science and even as warriors on the battlefield.
- It is important to include men in the dialogues involving violence against women. We are all God’s children and we are created equally by Him. It’s only fair to say that religious people should be able to instill these values of compassion and love in men and counsel them against violence.